

**BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS  
REGULAR MEETING  
Park and Recreation Department  
Conference Room, 11<sup>th</sup> Floor, City Hall  
Monday, March 13, 2006  
3:30 p.m.**

Present: Dennis Brunner, Glen Dey, Doug Leeper, Janet Miller and Mick Tranbarger

Absent: Cherylane Adams

Also Present: Martin Libhart and Marvis Foxx – U.S.D. 259; Kenton Cox and Joe Johnson, Schaeffer-Johnson-Cox & Fry; Merv Criser, John Coslett, Walt Campbell, Dale Churchman, Bill Owens and Bill Barnes – Kansas Firefighter’s Museum; Kathy Dittmer and M.S. Mitchell – Riverside Citizens Association; Rosemary Weber and Janice McKinney – GreenWay Alliance; Patty Marlett - Audubon Society; Rosa McHenry; Larry Ross; Mike North – Law Department; Scott Wadle – Planning Department; and Doug Kupper, Karen Walker, Tim Martz, and Maryann Crockett (staff)

President Miller called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

**PUBLIC AGENDA**

No Items.

**REGULAR AGENDA**

**On motion by Dey, second by Brunner, the Minutes of the February 13, 2006 Regular Meeting were reviewed and approved unanimously as submitted.**

1. **Discussion of U.S.D. 259 Request.** Director Kupper briefly reviewed the item stating that U.S.D. 259 was proposing a land exchange for park acreage west of Earhart Environmental Magnet Elementary School in Heller’s Park. He introduced Martin Libhart from U.S.D. 259.

Mr. Libhart provided board members a hand out which was a “Proposed trade of real property between U.S.D. 259 and the City of Wichita/Board of Park Commissioners”. He explained that U.S.D. 259 was currently in the process of constructing a new Earhart Environmental Magnet Elementary School at 4300 N. Seneca. He said the new school would house approximately 450 students.

Mr. Libhart introduced Kenton Cox from Schaeffer-Johnson-Cox & Fry who referred board members to the colored map of the site provided with the hand out. He explained that the old school and portables would stay in use until the new school (consisting of approximately 60,000 square feet) was completed, which they estimated would take between 14-16 months. He commented that when they began developing the plan for expansion of Earhart six years ago there was no City water or sewer to the site and that lateral fields were used; however, he said that was no longer the case and that the lateral fields previously used would be eliminated. He said they were requesting approximately 3.5 acres west of the school in Heller’s Park to construct the new school.

Mr. Libhart explained that the proposal was that U.S.D. 259 would transfer ownership of Parcel, "A" which consisted of approximately 3.45 acres west of Sullivan Street, and Parcel "B" which consisted of approximately 2.75 acres immediately east of Sullivan Street (a total of 6.20 acres referred to as the Riverview Elementary School site) to the City of Wichita/Board of Park Commissioners. He said in exchange, the City of Wichita and/or Board of Park Commissioners would transfer Parcel "C" which consisted of approximately 3.5 acres of Heller's Park immediately west of the west property line of Earhart Environmental Magnet Elementary School, including the dedicated right-of-way for a future extension of Mascot Avenue, and Parcel "D" which consisted of approximately 2.0 acres immediately north of the north property line of the school currently owned by the City of Wichita (a total of 5.50 acres).

Mr. Libhart noted that the Riverview Elementary School site, which has been closed for approximately ten years, had both a soccer field and lighted baseball diamond. Director Kupper asked what would be done with the land where the Earhart School currently existed? Mr. Libhart explained that it would be developed into a playground, bus loading and off loading staging area, and parking lot. Responding to additional questions, Mr. Libhart said the parking lot would consist of approximately 100 spaces. He added most of the area where the school and portables currently exist would be turned back into green space.

Leeper asked about fencing along the property line. Kenton Cox said no fencing was planned unless specifically requested. He said they planned on preserving as much of the natural area (trees and grass) as possible. President Miller asked about public access to the Arkansas River near the site. Director Kupper commented that the public could access the river from Arkansas and 43<sup>rd</sup> Street North. President Miller commented that she would take the no fencing comment with a grain of salt; specifically referencing the issue of the fence at Linwood Park that became clear "after" the project had been approved. Mr. Cox stated that there might be some fencing along the Arkansas River side of the property. Mr. Libhart said schools fence to keep equipment such as balls on school grounds and also for student safety. He added that fencing is expensive and it is also a maintenance issue.

President Miller asked who owned the area west of the Riverview site? Mr. Libhart said he would have U.S.D. 259 staff research the issue. President Miller also commented that she understood that Heights High school leased the lighted softball field every summer. She said she would like to poll the other board members to see if they wanted to act on the request today or table the issue until next month's meeting to insure that the public has this information.

President Miller asked if anyone from the public wished to comment on the issue. The following individuals spoke:

- Rosemary Weber – GreenWay Alliance – asked about the area surrounding the Riverview site. Mr. Libhart responded that it was surrounded by single-family residential.
- Larry Ross - said he believes this issue needs to be addressed by the City Council. He said the intrusion into public park space by facilities -- Police Stations, Fire Stations and schools. He made reference to Linwood School. He said this continual eroding of park and open space was collateral damage. He said a pattern seemrf to follow that park space is underutilized and open for any and all development. He said this issue needs to be addressed and perhaps a policy developed.

- M.S. Mitchell – commented that the Linwood School exchange gave the City more parkland than the school took from the park and that this proposed exchange would do the same in addition to creating a wilderness area along the Arkansas River. He also mentioned the athletic fields the City would acquire which he felt was an excellent trade.

President Miller asked what other park facilities were located in the area. Director Kupper said the Riverview area was very underserved. He added that a lighted ball diamond could cost in excess of \$100,000. He said acquiring Riverview would also provide access to the Arkansas River, which was one of the points in the Visioneering document. He mentioned that if the City did not approve the proposed land trade, they might need to look at acquiring the fields in the future. President Miller asked about public access. He said there was a quasi-parking area but that they were neighborhood type facilities open to walk-in traffic. He said as Park staff programmed the fields, improvements would be made. President Miller asked about the west edge of the property. Mr. Libhart stated that they thought that was private property, but that staff would research that.

Brunner commented that he felt the exchange would be a plus for the City; however, based on past experience, he recommended that the Board not move on the issue and give the public more time to react to the proposal. He said the City definitely needed parks in that area and getting facilities that were somewhat developed would be a big plus.

**On motion by Brunner, second by Dey, IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY VOTED to table the request until the April meeting in order to give the public an opportunity for comment.**

Dey verified that the parking lot and play equipment at Earhart Environmental Magnet Elementary School would be available for park patrons.

2. **Request from Historic Firefighter's Museum.** Director Kupper referred board members to correspondence from Walter E. Campbell, Kansas Firefighters Museum, Board of Directors. Mr. Campbell introduced himself and provided a handout, which was a letter from John Coslett, President, Kansas Firefighter's Museum, along with a copy of the "Kansas Firefighters Museum Master Plan". He requested that board members review the material thoroughly before making a decision. In addition, he invited the Board to tour the facility.

Mr. Campbell read a brief statement saying that if the Museum was to become a first class facility, they needed to expand. He mentioned that they have restored Model T and A fire engines and other memorabilia, artifacts, displays and firefighting apparatus that they are unable to display because of lack of space. He said they were proposing a 100' x 50' addition along the railroad corridor that would not cut off the view of Lincoln Park from either Broadway or Topeka. He said they had the complete support of the surrounding neighborhood associations. He said they believed expansion of the Museum would be a great improvement to south central Wichita and an asset to both the park and the City.

President Miller asked if board members had any questions. There was discussion concerning parking. John Coslett stated that they are currently using the parking lot at the used car lot. Brunner asked if financing was already secured for the expansion. Mr. Campbell said no, mainly because they do not own the property or fire station but have a 99-year lease with the City. Dey commented that he had an opportunity to have a private tour of the museum and that it was obvious that the restoration was a true "labor of love" and that volunteers donated a lot of "blood, sweat and tears" to the project.

However, he said he did have concerns about the expansion idea and how it might change the current fire station. Mr. Campbell explained that the building was on the National Register of Historical Places and that any new construction could not change the appearance of the existing building. John Coslett added that they had received information from the State Preservation Society on what they can and cannot do with new construction. Dey briefly mentioned a landscape plan reflective of a park in the 1900's. There as also mention of the proposed gazebo planned in the park. President Miller asked about the possibility of building a facility at the parking site instead of adding on to the current fire station. Mr. Campbell commented that if they built at that site, there would be no area left for parking. President Miller commented that the proposed expansion appeared to be twice as big as the current building.

President Miller asked if anyone from the public wished to comment on the issue. The following individual spoke:

- Dale Churchman – Vice President, South Central Improvement Alliance and Kansas Firefighter's Museum – stated that the neighborhood was very proud of the Firefighter's Museum. He commented that if it was a question of losing green space in the neighborhood, six mini parks have been added along the Bayley Rail Corridor within the last two years.

There was brief discussion concerning creation of the Bayley Rail Corridor. Brunner asked about the possibility that Fire Station #2 would be moved. Staff mentioned the impact of moving Fire Station #2 on fire response times. President Miller asked about the parking requirements for the expanded facility and whether the space across the street was adequate. Mr. Coslett commented that the parking lot currently accommodated 35 cars, but that there was also off-street parking along Topeka and Market Streets. President Miller mentioned the need to provide adequate parking for the facility, and to address the need to add parking in the future. Mr. Campbell explained that they had an "informal" agreement on use of the parking lot at the used car lot. President Miller clarified that there was no formal long-term agreement for the parking lot and expressed concern that it could cause a problem in the future. Mr. Coslett commented that the Baptist Church south of the park permits use of its parking lot, when that lot is not being used for church events.

President Miller requested that the group meet with the Office of Central Inspection (OCI) and determine exactly what the legal requirements were in terms of providing parking for the proposed expanded facility. Leeper also mentioned checking on any American's with Disability Act (ADA) requirements. President Miller stated that the parking issue was an integral part of the decision making on the project. Director Kupper asked the group to check with OCI and report back to the Board. President Miller also requested that the group provide initial drawings of the proposed expansion. Leeper mentioned the possibility of the group adopting Lincoln Park. He said he would like to go on record as supporting the project, with reservations about the parking issue.

**On motion by Leeper, second by Dey, IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY VOTED to table the request until the April meeting in order to give the public an opportunity for comment.**

3. **Discussion of Moratorium on Riverbank Replatting**. President Miller referred board members to the hand out, which was a proposed resolution "declaring and establishing a moratorium on the replatting of property adjacent to the Arkansas River".

Mike North, Assistant City Attorney, referred board members to page 2, paragraph 2, explaining that the Park Board had no authority to direct the action and decisions of the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission (MAPC) or County staff.

President Miller stated she would like the language of the proposed resolution to make it clear why the Board would like this issue reviewed by the City Council. There was discussion concerning the “high water mark”. President Miller said she thought the purpose of the proposed moratorium was to give the City Council and City staff an opportunity to review and perhaps revise the definition of “high water mark”. Director Kupper added, and also to stop the replatting of property along the Big Arkansas River until the definition is revised so that riverbanks are protected. He also mentioned that the Park Board needed clarification on its responsibilities concerning this matter, in addition to determining who has legal right to the reserves along the river. Dey suggested adding language that the request was designed to “prevent encroachment onto public land”.

There was discussion concerning checking with Planning and WAMPO before making a recommendation on the moratorium. President Miller suggested adding the wording “*reviewed and/or revised*” before “to accommodate planning projects under study”. Leeper suggested including “*river access*” in the 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph on page one.

**On motion by Miler, second by Leeper, IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY VOTED to recommend that the Law Department add the following wording before paragraph number one, “reviewed and/or revised to accommodate Planning projects under study”.**

President Miller requested that board members discuss this proposal with their respective City Council members.

President Miller requested that the order of the agenda be changed to accommodate members of the public.

**On motion by Brunner, second by Leeper, IT WAS UNANIMOUSLY VOTED to take up Item #7 – Oak Park Audubon Concern and then Item #6 – Discussion of Riverside Tree Condition Report.**

4. **Oak Park Audubon Concern**. President Miller said she had requested that this item be placed on the agenda so the Board could discuss concerns about conditions at Oak Park expressed at last month’s meeting.

Director Kupper stated that the Disc Golf group had been told to “cease and desist” any widening of paths or clearing of vegetation without proper authorization from Park staff. In addition, he said the City Naturalist, Bob Gress, had been asked to evaluate the conditions of both Oak and Sim Parks. He reported that there had been some degradation of the wildlife habitat; some of the trails had been widened at Oak Park; and the “no bike” signs had also been removed at Oak Park.

President Miller asked if anyone from the public wished to comment on the issue. The following individuals spoke:

- **Kathy Dittmer – Riverside Citizens Association** – stated that once RCA became aware of the Audubon Society’s concerns, they suggested a meeting with the RCA, North Riverside and Midtown Neighborhood Associations, as well as the Disc Golf and Audubon groups to discuss the

situation so that all groups could understand what was going on in the park. President Miller asked if Ms. Dittmer would coordinate such a meeting. Ms. Dittmer said as a member of the RCA "Park Use Task Force" she would set up the meeting and notify Department Staff and the Park Board.

- Rosa McHenry – commented that she has lived in Riverside for many years. She said she has never seen Oak Park look as bad as it does now. She mentioned erosion and damage to shrubs and trees and conflicts between user groups. She reminded the Board that Oak Park is designated as a "Wichita Wildlife Habitat Area". She said the neighbors feel very strongly about the park and would like to see it upgraded and maintained.

Director Kupper reported that staff would be addressing erosion issues. Responding to a question, he said off-road biking is available at Chapin Park.

5. **Discussion of Riverside Tree Condition Report.** Tim Martz, Superintendent of Forestry and Central Support, referred board members to a PowerPoint presentation and Excel spreadsheet entitled "Riverside Park Tree Inventory". He reviewed the reports as follows: Tree and species totals; Top ten species by park area – Central, North and South Riverside Parks; Mature tree height; Tree condition; Tree total comparison (20-year); Tree density; and Historic tree inventory.

Mr. Martz commented that staff is diversifying tree species, with the introduction of Dutch Elm Disease in the 60's, the goal is no more than 15% of any one genus of the total trees planted. He added that staff is planting smaller, ornamental trees. He mentioned safety and liability issues and said that some trees had been removed pre-maturely because of these factors. He said tree condition is fair and that the City needs to be aggressively planting new trees to replace trees lost to age, storm events (drought conditions and the ice storm) and construction activities. He said overall tree density has declined over the past twenty years; however, tree species diversity was excellent. He referred board members to the cover of the Power Point presentation stating that the Bur Oak pictured was over 100 years old.

Mr. Martz said staff was making the following recommendations: Purchase of new computer software (currently being used by the Water & Sewer and the Public Works Departments) to help track tree health and manage tree inventory; continuation of the eight-year inventory program of each park; continuing aggressive tree planting efforts within the Riverside Park System; continuing species diversity with new plantings, focusing on medium and large mature species; and to continuing monthly forestry inspections and the systematic tree pruning program.

6. **Proposed El Zocalo City Council Agenda Report.** Director Kupper explained that the City Council Agenda Report on this item could not be released until it had been presented to Council first, then it will be public record. He commented that the agenda framed the Park Board's motion on the item.
7. **Report on Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan.** Scott Wadle, Metropolitan Area Planning Department, provided several hand outs including a draft summary of ideas dated 3/8/06 and a Power Point presentation entitled "Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Plan", which outlined the necessity for the Plan and the process by which the Plan would be accomplished.

President Miller commented that the Visioneering Steering Committee showed interest in making the PROS Plan one of their initiatives for 2006. Director Kupper commented on Visioneering's 4-County

planning process. President Miller commented that staff needed to visit further with them to work out details. Director Kupper commented that completion of the PROS Plan would assist staff in planning future budgets, Capital Improvement Programming (CIP) and others, so maximum citizen and City Council input and buy in was important.

8. **Director's Update**. Director Kupper reported briefly on the following items:

- Dedication of Phyllis Hall Park – Saturday, March 18, 2006.
- Dedication of the Sylvia Hirahara-Hartley Bike Path - Saturday, June 3, 2006.
- Sedgwick County Pathways Plan - reported that WAMPO was working on an alternative transportation plan. President Miller requested that this item be placed on the April agenda. Scott Waddle said the Planning Department would undertake a separate study to identify existing bike paths and determine where links and additional trails should be located. Dey asked if the floodway was included in the study, since a lot of park trails were adjacent to it. Director Kupper said the consultant would look at that. President Miller mentioned the recommendations of the Drainage Task Force.
- South City Neighborhood Plan - Dey noted that the Fire Museum expansion plan had not been identified in the South City Neighborhood Plan.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at approximately 5:40 p.m.

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Janet Miller, President

ATTEST:

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Maryann Crockett  
Recording Secretary